

# Today's Well-being through Dialogue between Christians and Non-Christians

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## 1. Civil Society with Public Religion

I would like to confirm, first of all, the Christian cultural and historical position in Asia. Christianity here is the newcomer and therefore has sometimes experienced conflicts with indigenous religions in the practical lives. These conflicts, though they are not so simple, seemed to be on social levels in many countries, where the modernized constitutions are actually adopted as the legal and institutional order. We should make the most of this modern constitutional situation as a gift of our time for well-being among many different people.

For the university students, from my teaching experience, it is better to teach Christianity together with the rules of modern civil society in addition to the Biblical-theological knowledge<sup>(1)</sup>. The rules of modern civil society will have the double meanings. One is what we call 'the first modernization' as is manifested in the 16<sup>th</sup>–18<sup>th</sup> century in the western countries. The other we will call 'the second modernization' according to German sociologist Ulrich Beck's idea of risk-society<sup>(2)</sup>. In the world of second modernity we are now living as the global citizens, instead of the post-modern world philosophers often prefer to use.

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( 1 ) H. Inagaki, 'Person, Society and Religions', Exchange, Brill, Leiden-Boston, vol. 32:2, 2003, pp. 154–167.

( 2 ) Ulrich Beck et al. *Reflexive Modernization: Politics, Tradition and Aesthetics in the Modern Social Order*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1998.

The characteristic feature of the first modernization was to construct a strong nation state with dualistic division of the state and civil society. In Asian history, e.g., in Japan, the first modernization started after the middle of 19th century. The second modernization has started from 1970s, which does not necessarily deny the first modernization but is a reflexive self-reform of it, especially trying to overcome many environmental risks the industrial society has produced. The secondly modernized society has three-fold divisions among the state, market and life-world. The life-world of citizen wants to protect itself against invasions from the state power and the greedy competitive free market. To fulfill this purpose, the citizens need more direct channel than usual representative democracy. This is why a participative democracy or a discursive democracy in the second modernity has becoming the hot issue, and now is gradually having replaced the representative democracy of the first modernity.

As for religious situation, first modernity excluded Christianity from the public region in the Enlightenment mentality, whose role will be evaluated both in positive way and negative way. For instance, freedom of individuals, equality under the laws, respect of human rights, religious tolerance and separation of church and state are highly valued, but the most problematic point was the exclusion of religion in the public region and therefore inevitable reduction into utilitarianism of human life in general.

The important feature of the second modernity will be to form the civil society without excluding religions in the public domain, which I would like to call the Civil Society with Public Religion (CSPR). Since it is important to notice that dialogue among religions and ideologies are very important in order to make a healthy civil society in the second modernization process, Christianity in Asia, even though it is minority, has true ‘citizenship’ together with other religions to participate in this dialogue. Christians here will play a critical roll to succeed to the freedom, equality, human rights and so on the first modernity could achieve to gain, because these are just the by-products the Christian civilization has produced.

Christian can take other religions as the manifestation of semen religionis or sensus devinitatis (J. Calvin)<sup>(3)</sup>. I will evaluate the roll of other religions for

construction of today's civil society, as a gift of common grace<sup>(4)</sup> Christians can accept the special grace of salvation in addition to common grace that refrains the external sins through the redemption of work of Christ. Thus the teaching of 'loving your neighbor' is essential to building a CSPR. I mean the term Public Religion as just giving a public domain a suitable position to Christian religion together with other religions a suitable public position.

'Giving religions a suitable public meaning' is quite important in Asia and Japan because other traditional religions were already there before Christian missionaries came and did their work. Those traditional religions could not prepare to build the civil society in Asia, but rather sometimes hindered the westernized Enlightenment that constituted the foundation of the first modernity. Traditional religions in Asia and Japan are either completely private or state-authorized religions, but could not help to form the intermediate public civil society between the private and the state. In other words, those religions are either private religions or state religions, but not Public Religions. To form a civil society in the intermediated region between the private and the state, we need a certain ethos fostered by some religion based on person-to-person communications. It will be well endowed with the concept of Public Religion.

While Christianity in Asia are very much inclined to be the private religion, traditional folk religions have been exploited as the state religions such as Shinto in Japan, Hindu in India, Islam in Indonesia, Buddhism in Thailand, Sri Lanka and so on. Now, Christianity should shift from the private sphere to the civil public sphere, and at the same time other folk religions should retire from stately governed status by acquiring an autonomous position. The state must have the same equal distance from all religious institutions.

Although the state religion is monistic and used as the means to give unification to a nation state, public religions are plural, being expected to give

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( 3 ) H. Inagaki and N. Jennings, *Philosophical Theology and East-West Dialogue*, Amsterdam & New York, Rodopi, 2000.

( 4 ) H. Inagaki, 'Comparative Study of Kuyperian Palingenesis', C. van der Kooi, & J. de Bruijn, (eds.) *Kuyper Reconsidered*, Free Univ. Press, 1999.

the teaching of ‘loving your neighbor’, and going across the boundaries of nations. In the Asian context, the concept of plural public religions is important for Christian minority in order to claim publicly their opinions on an equal footing with other traditional religions through dialogue for the purpose of co-existence peacefully. This dialogue is not for truth claim in a theological sense, but for creating an ethos to form public civil society. The acquisition of freedom, human respect, the improvement of public welfare and the peaceful co-existence with different others are the main issues in this dialogue. Recent philosophical debates concerning a construction of public sphere in democratic society also stress on the dialogues among different others (Hanna Arendt, Jurgen Habermas).

In these years, the term ‘Public Religion’ is used by L. Cady and J. Casanova in the sense of ‘Giving religions a suitable public meaning.’ The former uses this term wishing to recover theology that has been pushed into a private sphere especially in the American context. The latter uses the term sociologically referring to relation between modernization and globally activated religions.

Casanova shows traditional religions like Roman Catholicism are ‘deprivatized’ in many different global regions, although the theory of the first modernization predicted that these religions would become privatized and made peripheral. The core of the theory of secularization, the thesis of the differentiation and emancipation of the secular spheres from religious institutions and norms, remains valid. But the term ‘deprivatization’ is also meant to signify the emergence of new historical developments which, at least qualitatively, amount to a certain reversal of what appeared to be secular trends. Religions throughout the world are entering the public sphere and the area of political contestation not only to defend their traditional turf, as they have done in the past, but also to participate in the very struggles to define and set the modern boundaries **between** the private and governmental spheres, **between** system and life-world, **between** legality and morality, **between** individual and society, **between** family, civil society and state, **between** nations, state, civilizations, and the world system<sup>(5)</sup>.

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(5) Jose Casanova, *Public Religions in the Modern World*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1994, 6.

These ‘between’ concepts are essential to the idea of Public Religion. In Asian countries, not only Christianity but also the traditional religions are expected to transform themselves into a certain new form of these ‘between’ concepts. We need dialogue among different religious faiths for the purpose of forming a healthy civil society, while keeping the rule of strict separation of state and religious institutions. Each religious faith should transform itself to practice ‘loving your neighbor’ with mercy and tolerance, if it wants to enter the public arena. Any religion cannot become the establishment that has a solely privilege endowed by the authoritative state power. Thus religious faith is personal but at the same time possessing freedom to express itself in the public sphere.

In the liberal concept religion is and ought to remain a private affair. The liberal fear of the politicization of religion is simultaneously the fear of an establishment which could endanger the individual freedom of conscience and the fear of a deprivatized ethical religion which could bring extraneous conceptions of justice, of the public interest, of the common good, and of solidarity into the “neutral” deliberations of the liberal public sphere<sup>(6)</sup>. Here the ‘establishment’ means Shinto in Japan, Hinduism in India, Islam in Indonesia and Buddhism in Thailand. From the normative perspective of the second modernity, religion may enter the public sphere and assume a public form only if it accepts the inviolable right to privacy and the sanctity of the principle of freedom of conscience<sup>(7)</sup>. The concept of Public Religion would serve to show, question, and contest the very “limits” of the neutral liberal political and social order<sup>(8)</sup>.

## 2. Ethics: Friendship and Altruism

While the primary rule of the first modernity was a social contract, the most important ethos of the second modernity is friendship. All traditional great religions include the concept of ‘loving your neighbor’, mercy or friendship.

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( 6 ) Ibid., 55.

( 7 ) Ibid., 57.

( 8 ) Ibid., 58.

Social contract is intra-generational, but love can be inter-generational, which is now thought to be necessary also in the ecological ethics.

A similar word to friendship is fraternity. The French Revolution, the typical starting point of the first modernity, is well known from counting fraternity as a motto in addition to liberty and equality. But fraternity is different from friendship, for the former has originally brood-linkage meaning such as brotherhood or folk, but the latter is tied in more voluntary linkage. Fraternity will be and surely was turned out to be patriotism within one modern homogeneous nation state. This certainly reflects the concept of the first modernity. Friendship, however, will become the basic concept to form the second modernity that transcends brood-linkage, folk or natural relationship, giving more human universal bondage with love.

British author C.S. Lewis wrote an excellent essay entitled *The Four loves*. Then he estimated Friendship apart from Affection, Eros and Charity as follows.

Friendship is — in a sense not at all derogatory to it — the least natural of loves; the least instinctive, organic, biological, gregarious and necessary. It has least commerce with our nerves; there is nothing throaty about it; nothing that quickens the pulse or turns you red and pale. It is essentially between individuals; the moment two men are friends they have in some degree drawn apart together from the herd. Without Eros none of us would have been begotten and without Affection none of us would have been reared; but we can live and breed without Friendship<sup>(9)</sup>.

Friendship is referred to in the Scripture, for instance, in John 15:13, 'Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.' In the Old Testament we can find a beautiful narrative of David and Jonathan for a typical friendship story. Scriptural commandment says 'love your neighbor' (Mathew 22:39) instead of 'love your Christian fellows.' This is a teaching for love to different others in modern society even if they are not in our own camp.

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( 9 ) C. S. Lewis, *The Four Loves*, New York, Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Inc, 1960, 88.

A similar topic in ethics is Altruism. To illustrate a problem concerning with Altruism, I will show some discussions in the field of social philosophy by Karl Popper. Popper was a well-known liberalist who opposed totalitarianism. He mentions Altruism from the side of individualism. A clear distinction between individualism and collectivism is very important in order to understand the meaning of Altruism in ethics. Popper noted that Altruism may be perverted by the state, and, therefore, he limits this Altruism in its use in the level of the individual person instead of extending it to community. Let us first clarify the terminology;

Individualism is opposed to Collectivism.

Egoism (Selfishness) is opposed to Altruism<sup>(10)</sup>.

Thus Individualist is not necessarily Egoist. Individualist can be Altruist and Collectivist can be Egoist. Popper shows in his *Open Society and its Enemy* that Plato and many Platonist misused this point, i.e., they connected all Altruisms with Collectivism and all Individualisms with Egoism. This is the origin of totalitarianism in Western thought. But, unfortunately, this misuse is quite familiar with Asian ethical and political situation. Japanese State-Shinto, for example, used the same idea that all Altruisms were connected to Collectivism and all Individualisms to Egoism.

Although Popper's political philosophy is based on methodological individualism or liberalism, it is interesting to know that he requires altruistic ethics to individual person, instead of allowing the pursuit of selfish interest as is usually presupposed by liberalism. He says in the following way.

This individualism, united with altruism, has become the basis of our western civilization. It is the central doctrine of Christianity ('love your neighbor', say the Scripture, not 'love your tribe'); and it is the core of all ethical doctrines which have grown from our civilization and stimulated it<sup>(11)</sup>.

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(10) Karl Popper, *Open Society and Its Enemies*, London & New York, Routledge, 1995 (1945) 106.

(11) Ibid., 108.

Popper also approves that one of basic pillars of Western civilization is Christianity. However, noting that this Christianity has been united with Greek thought and sometimes functioned as an oppressive ideology exploited by the state religion, it is understandable that Christian faith today should be considered to be limited within the private affairs.

But the situation is different in the modern Asian context in two particular points. One is that Christianity in Asia is the religion of minority and therefore cannot become the state religion. The other is that Asian people must form a civil society, from bottom to up, with an ethical value such as friendship in the plural situation of religions. Since we are now in the time of second modernity, Christianity should play the role of Public Religion. This unique position of Christianity in Asia is one of the important matters that Christian higher education must teach in its core curriculum.

Another unique position of Christian religion in Asia is its educational function in science. Since, among many religions, only Christianity had the strong historical connection with development of modern science, it has a merit to be able to give a suitable science education for improving people's earthly lives. Scientific knowledge for life and environmental problems are very important to protect people from natural disasters such as AIDS, typhoons, earthquakes etc.

### 3. Peace Maker as Religious Public Education

Let us begin with a concrete religious public illustration in Japan, having some relations with Asia before the War.

Recently Jyun-ichiro Koizumi visited and worshiped at Yasukuni Shrine with his intention of formal role as the Prime Minister. It has been done five times, namely on August 13 in 2001, on April 21 in 2002, on January 14 in 2003, on January 1 in 2004 and October 17 in 2005. The so-called **official worship** at Yasukuni Shrine by the Prime Minister has been controversial for a long time in Japan because it inevitably has had a religio-political meaning. Yasukuni Shrine was originally founded in 1869 by the state at the time of Meiji government for consecration of the spirits of dead soldiers. The Emperor and the government



officers worshiped this Shrine regularly. Thus being consecrated here was thought highly honored among the nation before the World War II. This Shrine was a religio-political symbol of the Japanese Nation State that gave justification for the modern Japanese wars.

After the War, this Shrine was separated from the state, because, first of all, the new Japanese constitution declares the separation of shrine (church) and state, and, furthermore, the peace-wish among the nation was strong. For several political reasons, starting at the end of the 60's, the LDP (Liberal Democratic Party) and conservative people wanted Yasukuni Shrine to be again controlled by the government. Although they did not succeed in this policy directly, being faced with strong objections, mainly from religious groups, they tried to find another indirect solution in the form of the **official worship** by the governmental officers.

This **official worship** by the Prime Minister Koizumi has encountered a strong objection not only from the religious and the liberal camps, but also from Korea, China and other Asian countries because this Shrine is sacred to the A-class war criminals in the Pacific War. Actually some group thought that Koizumi's action would not be allowed by the rule of the separation of Shrine and State declared in the Japanese constitution and it is reacted with the lawsuit to the courts by many citizens including Korean people living in Japan. To his action the foreign critics alarmed at the possibilities of a return to militarism in Japan. Historically, by exploiting the religiosity of ancestor worship, Yasukuni Shrine was consecrated to the dead spirits of the people who fought for the Emperor and therefore was placed in the center of the Japanese Empire in religio-political sense. It can be said that this Shrine was the central political ideology of assimilation to the subjects of the Emperor, but has been camouflaged by the Japanese "culture", that is to say, the pantheistic religiosity. Even today, this Shrine is also physically and literally at the center of Tokyo, next to the Imperial Palace, and thus at the physical as well as symbolic center of Japan.

To get rid of the foreign criticism, the Japanese government at last began to consider an alternative to Yasukuni Shrine, and finally, on December 25 in 2002, presented a report that identified the need of National Memorial Monument

for Peace (NMMP) instead of Yasukuni Shrine. Many people think that the government should start to construct this NMMP in order to stop governmental officers from performing **official worship** at Yasukuni Shrine. They should use this NMMP to remember the wars and people who died in Japan and in other countries into which the Japanese troops invaded. This should be done with intention for making a world peace in future. Different religious groups also can use this NMMP in their prayers for world peace.

But, surprisingly enough, two different extreme camps soon began to object to this plan.

- (1) The Prime Minister Koizumi and groups promoting Yasukuni Shrine.
- (2) Some liberals. And Christians and Buddhists who have hitherto strongly objected the governmental **official worship**.

What surprised me is not the objection from (1) but from (2), because I had thought it quite natural that the group (2) would welcome the alternative to Yasukuni Shrine. This reaction impresses on me a serious issue in public philosophy in Japan, concerning **otherness**. Group (1) is a kind of communitarianism rooted in an ethnic mind, wishing to govern people by emphasizing the Emperor. They do not like that Yasukuni Shrine would be eclipsed by the construction of a new NMMP. The mental situation of group (2) is rather complicated. It seems that group (2), reacting strongly to group (1), is pushed to the position of “libertarians”. The Christians and Buddhists in objection to group (1) are forced to become very individualistic in their faiths. They are inclined to think the government to be evil at any time. Remembering the people who died in the wars is a personal problem in their opinions and, therefore, not a governmental problem. For them construction of a new NMMP by the government is merely preparation to open the way to the next war, or to a militaristic Japan.

These two different opinions are two extremes and, in my opinion, devoid of the sense of **others** or CSPR.

Group (1) sticks to Shinto animism sponsored by the government and has no care about **other** religious people and liberals.

Group (2) sticks to their individual faiths or life styles and have no care about **others**, without preparing a common place of remembering the wars.

The wars were not personal events and, therefore, need a public forum to think about them. Many groups including religious institutions in civil society should try to form public opinions to this problem in their own manners. How do we think about these problems as our responsibilities as Christians in Asian civil society?

The Memorial Monument for the dead soldier can become propaganda for the state to keep their patriotism (e.g. *Imagined Communities* by Benedict Anderson). I know, for instance, this can be used as a means to amplify the nationalism. But, Japanese citizens, by repenting the past brutal Japanese militarism, still have a responsibility to make such a public Memorial Monument for all people who died from the Pacific War, independent from the governmental policy, for wishing future peace in Asia. For me as a Japanese Christian, 'Never forget the memory of the Pacific War' is an important factor as a peacemaker for creating a cooperative civil society in Asia based on the Public Religion. This is another important matter Japanese Christian higher education must teach in its core curriculum.